



Creating Community Through People, Parks and Programs



City of Covington Parks and Recreation Department

## *A Message from the Director*

On behalf of all the Parks and Forestry Commission Members, Volunteers, Residents and Staff that helped with its creation, I am pleased to present the Parks and Recreation Department's Strategic Plan for 2006 and beyond.

There has only been a Parks and Recreation Department in Covington since 2002. The Department started simply by acquiring land and constructing the City's first park. There have been a lot of changes in the community since 2002, with rapid growth, changing demographics and new funding limitations. Despite this, our core purpose remains as simple as our beginnings. We exist **to build community through people, parks and programs**. This strategic plan has been developed to make sure that we focus our actions, efforts and resources so future generations will reap the "simple" benefits of: beautiful public places, quality recreation programs and facilities, excellent customer service, and opportunities for residents to interact with the larger community.

The Plan is divided into four chapters: Introduction, Strategic Plan Overview, Strategic Actions and Plan Implementation and Updates.

The introduction describes why we chose to develop a plan, the process for collecting information, and the desire to make this a living document. The overview sections set the context by describing the core purpose, values, and outcomes we hope to achieve. We were very clear that we wanted a plan rooted in factual vs. anecdotal data. Much of the data that formed our strategies is contained in this section and includes: Issues identified as high priorities, feedback from the City surveys, results of outreach efforts to service clubs, youth organizations, and neighborhood groups and trends identified by the parks and recreation profession.

The recommended action strategies are grouped into the three categories of **Parks and Facilities, Recreation Programs, and Organizational Development**. The specific goals and actions are summarized in our Executive Summary. The report concludes with our plans for tracking and updating the document.

The late President of the United States Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." Those who created this strategic plan would probably agree with our former President. We believe that the planning has been indispensable to the future of our organization. I am very proud of the fact that many people had a hand in putting together this vision for the Department's future. Their listing in our acknowledgement page is a small token of our appreciation. I look forward to your support in making this plan a reality for the City of Covington.

David Erickson  
Parks and Recreation Director

## Acknowledgements

### City Council

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# Executive Summary

The Strategic Plan provides a guiding framework of principles and policy directions. The framework includes the Department's purpose, vision, and values, as well as the goals and objectives the Department will achieve in implementing the plan. The process of implementing the Strategic Plan benefits the community as a whole, by focusing the City's commitment to Parks and Recreation services.

## Purpose

Our mission is to build a great community together through people, parks, and programs.

## Vision

We partner with the community to provide innovative and high-value parks, facilities, programs and services that promote an engaged and healthy community.

## Values

- Creativity – Freedom to imagine and the courage to act
- Excellence – Passion to do our best in each moment
- Integrity – Do the right thing, not the easy thing
- Service – We care and it makes a difference

## Goals

### Parks and Facilities

Ensure equitable access to safe and attractive parks and facilities that meet community needs.

We consider our facilities to be the Community's public living rooms and backyards. We found that Covington is below the average acreage of parkland for similar cities, and our community told us that providing well maintained parks and open spaces are important, particularly in the area of sports fields. This situation will only be exacerbated as the population of our City continues to grow. Our strategies in this area are fourfold.

1. We need to identify and secure new funding sources for the acquisition and development of new parks and protection of sensitive areas.
2. We need to get the most out of our existing facilities by improving scheduling, space allocation along with safety and amenities found in each area.
3. We need to provide adequate resources to maintain our existing facilities in a safe, clean and attractive manner.
4. We need to focus energy on creating beautiful public spaces based on best practices for environmental protection.

## Recreation, Programs

Offer high quality programs to all age groups, abilities and interests.

Our goal for the Recreation Division is to offer diverse, high quality programs to all ages, interests and abilities. Programs offered in the past emphasized fun, safety, community building, skill development and life enrichment. Surveys completed by the Northwest Institute indicated that the largest need in Covington was to provide more recreational opportunities for youth. Available funding, staffing and the need to maintain lower costs have limited the ability of the City to provide the additional requested programming. Our emphasis in this area is to:

1. Improve cost recovery while continuing to provide for those who cannot afford services.
2. Improve the ability to expand services to meet the needs of the community by securing funding sources that will allow for increased staffing and the provision of programs.
3. Improve the ability to collect information on customer satisfaction.

## Organization

Create a dynamic, professional organization committed to an ongoing process of innovation.

In order to make the vision a reality, the Department needs to:

1. Provide training and support to its commissioners, volunteers and staff on how to facilitate rather than solve community issues.
2. Expand and develop new partnerships in the community.
3. Further expand non-general fund resources available to the Department.
4. Develop accountability standards for each work unit.
5. Continue to ensure that volunteer and staff efforts are recognized and appreciated.

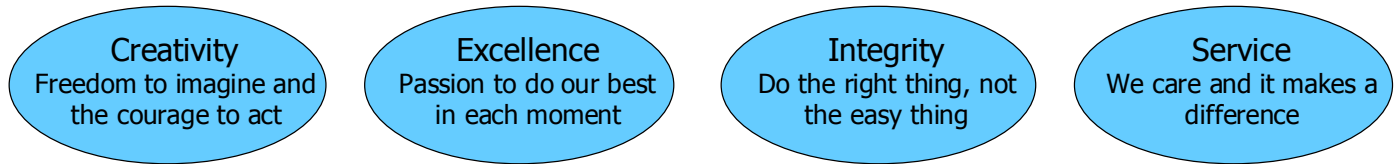
## Community Benefit

The plan will help the City of Covington realize important community outcomes, including: community image and sense of place, economic development, safety and security, health and wellness, human development, cultural unity, environmental resource protection, community problem solving, and recreational experiences. This information is presented graphically on the following page.

## DEPARTMENT MISSION

To build a great community together through people, parks and programs

## CORE VALUES



## VISION

We partner with the community to provide innovative and high-value parks, facilities, programs and services that promote an engaged and healthy community.

## COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

- Community image and sense of place
- Economic Development
- Safety and security
- Health and wellness
- Human development
- Recreation experiences
- Environmental resource protection
- Community problem solving
- Fun and personal growth

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

PARKS AND FACILITIES	RECREATION PROGRAMS	ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Provide safe, clean, attractive parks and facilities in adequate numbers and diversity, distributed throughout the community now and into the future.	Offer diverse, high quality recreation, athletic and aquatic programs to all age groups, interests and ability levels.	Create a dynamic organization committed to an ongoing process of innovation.
A1. Increase park and facility maintenance and operation levels.	B1. Increase program participation rates.	C1. Maintain and increase staff engagement and training.
A2. Expand facility capacity to match growth consistent with the Capital Investment Plan.	B2. Secure new revenue sources to support the provision of program services.	C2. Develop performance measures for all program elements.
A3. Secure new revenue sources to support the operation of existing facilities and acquire and develop future sites.	B3. Increase program cost recovery.	C3. Take full advantage of non-City funding alternatives.
A4. Increase cost recovery of facility operations.	B4. Increase participant satisfaction.	C4. Improve productivity and organizational effectiveness.
A5. Increase park satisfaction rating as perceived by community members.	B5. Support ongoing activities.	C5. Enhance Commission operations.
	B6. Increase awareness of recreational services and program philosophy.	C6. Increase customer service and satisfaction.

**Figure 2: Strategic Plan Framework**

## Plan Implementation and Updates

The annual process for implementing the plan through the budget is detailed below:

<b>March</b> Annual Progress Report	The Director will develop a report to review implementation progress. For each goal area, the report will describe the status of implementation, including successes and barriers, and list the next steps and any resource or support needs. The report will also review prior year data from: CIP review, survey results, and performance measures.
<b>May</b> Parks and Forestry Commission CIP Project Review Meeting	The Commission will conduct a session on CIP projects in preparation for the budget process.
<b>June</b> Parks and Forestry Commission Priorities and Plan Update Session	The Commission will meet to develop strategic priorities for the coming year based on a review of the Director's progress report.
<b>July</b> Strategic Plan Update	The Department will update the Strategic Plan to reflect the findings of the Director's report and the Commission priorities.
<b>August</b> Budget Submittal	The Department submits its budget request to the Finance Department.
<b>October</b> City Council Priorities	The City Council will establish its priorities with input from the Department's strategic planning process.
<b>December</b> Final Budget and CIP	The City completes its budget process including items developed through the strategic planning process.

A comprehensive strategic planning update process will be completed every four years and will include:

- Assessment of community needs and trends using surveys, program evaluations and focus groups
- Involvement of Department staff
- Review of progress toward action objectives
- Review of performance measures
- Input from Commissions





## **Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION**

## **Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION**

The development of the City of Covington Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan 2006 was guided by the Parks and Forestry and Arts Commissions and staff, representing a broad cross section of the community. One of their first work products was a list of the desired outcomes for a Strategic Plan. These expectations included: reflecting needs expressed by the community; using hard data on community demographics; developing unifying principles for decision making; identifying priorities, goals, timelines and resources needed for recommended work; and providing a vehicle to communicate the needs and proposed work to policymakers, the general public and staff.

### **A. PLAN PURPOSE**

The plan has three major purposes:

Vision: Present a long-term vision of success to inform planning and management;

Priorities: Create a list of Divisional and Departmental priorities to provide the flexibility to adjust the plan to the Department's budget environment; and

Process: Develop a process for managing the Department's commitments so that new requests and initiatives are considered in light of existing commitments.

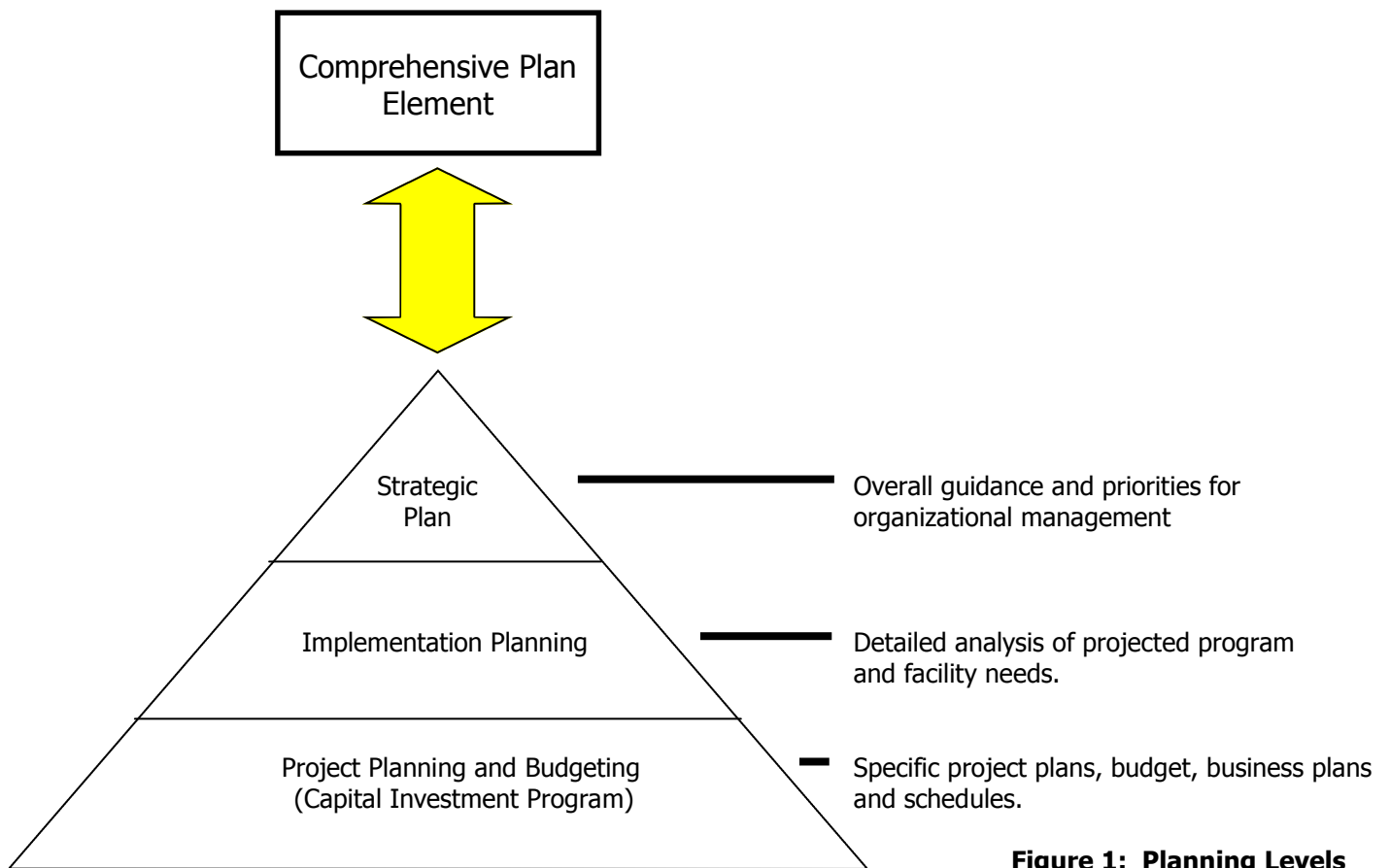
### **B. INFORMATION USED TO DEVELOP THE PLAN**

The Department reviewed several sources of information to identify strategic issues and objectives. Citywide community surveys, completed in 2003, 2004 and 2006, were key sources of input. The survey included a set of questions on parks and recreation. Staff also reviewed the results of meetings with community groups and sports leagues, which provided additional information about user needs and goals. The plan also reflects quantitative data, including an assessment of data from the 2000 Census and from the Department's operational statistics. Finally, the City Council Vision and priorities were reviewed to ensure that the strategic plan supports the City's overall efforts to provide excellence in service to the community of Covington.

### **C. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the strategic plan and other planning and management activities. The strategic plan is comprehensive: it provides guidance and priorities for all areas of the Department. As it moves forward into implementation, the Department will conduct detailed implementation planning to achieve its strategic priorities. Finally, specific implementation actions will be funded and scheduled through project plans and the budget process. The Capital Investment Program will be used to implement major facility improvements. Collectively, the Department's planning and analysis tools will inform

development of the parks and recreation element of the City of Covington's Comprehensive Plan.



**Figure 1: Planning Levels**

**D. DEPARTMENTAL POLICY AND ADVISORY STRUCTURE**

The Department receives policy direction and guidance from the City Council and their appointed advisory bodies including the Parks and Forestry Commission and the Arts Commission.

**E. IMPLEMENTATION**

The Plan includes implementation responsibilities, timelines, and resource implications for each objective to facilitate effective implementation, which the Department will use to link the plan to the budget process. The Director will develop an annual progress report to review implementation progress. For each goal area, the report will describe the status of implementation, including successes and barriers, and list next steps and any resource or support needs. The report will provide an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the implementation, and identify opportunities to improve the linkage between planning and implementation.

## **F. UPDATE PROCESS**

The plan will be revised as needed to reflect lessons learned during implementation and to reflect changing community needs. Comprehensive updates will take place every four years, drawing on community feedback, assessment of performance measures, internal staff input, and Parks and Forestry Commission and Arts Commission or City Council priorities.

## **G. PLANNING DEFINITIONS**

The strategic plan uses a number of key terms:

**Core Purpose:** The essential reason for the organization's existence.

**Values:** The norms and qualities of the organization's values.

**Vision:** The desired future state of the organization; the vision of success the organization strives to achieve.

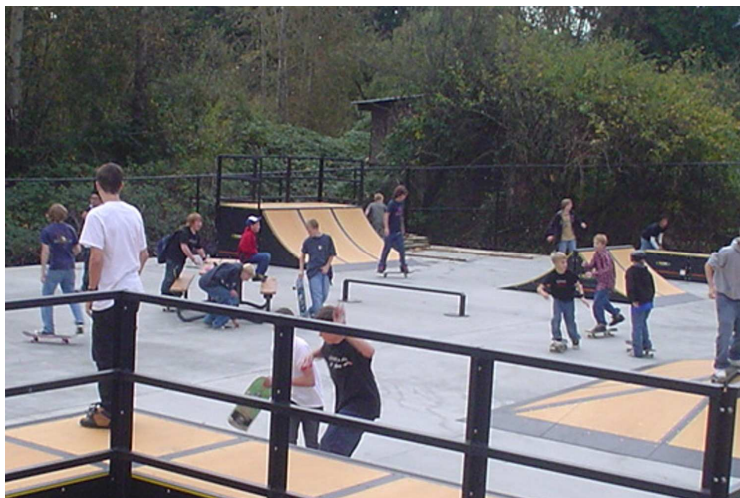
**Mission:** A description of why the organization exists, the key programs and services the organization provides.

**Goal Areas:** The broad areas for improvement aligned to match the programs and service provided by the Department.

**Strategies:** The approaches to be used to achieve the Department's goals.

**Parks:** This includes parks, trails, natural areas, and recreational facilities such as the Covington Aquatic Center.

**Recreation:** This includes arts, aquatics, athletics, outdoor, cultural, special event, recreation, enrichment, parks, adaptive, health, fitness, wellness, safety and other program areas.





## **Chapter 2: STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW**

## Chapter 2: STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW

This section presents the core elements of the Strategic Plan in the following sections:

- Guiding Framework
- Planning Context

### A. GUIDING FRAMEWORK

The Department's mission, vision, values and goals form the foundation for the Strategic Plan and create a guiding framework for planning and decision-making. A description of community outcomes describes the results the plan will help bring about. Figure 2 illustrates the plan's framework.

#### Mission

Our mission is to build a great community through people, parks, and programs. Our mission reflects two overarching principles. First, the community is the owner of the Department's programs and facilities, providing program development and management and volunteer support. The mission also includes a commitment to managing and expanding the community's resources, including conservation of natural resources and support for the City's economic vitality. The result is the Department's consistent efforts to create a great community—one that is vibrant, healthy, and strong.

The Department fulfills its mission by carrying out five key functions:

- ✓ Provide high-quality parks and recreational facilities.
- ✓ Provide high-quality recreational programs.
- ✓ Efficiently manage City parks, trails and facilities.
- ✓ Create and maintain effective organizational processes.
- ✓ Recruit, support, retain and challenge great employees.

#### Vision

We partner with the community to provide innovative and high-value parks, facilities, programs and services that promote an engaged and healthy community.

#### Values

The values of the Parks and Recreation Department describe the basic behaviors, attributes, principles and beliefs that guide staff. The values have been developed in consultation with staff and are the foundation of staff attitudes toward their work, their mission and their relationships.

We Value...

- |   |             |   |
|---|-------------|---|
| ✓ | Creativity: | Freedom to imagine and the courage to act |
| ✓ | Excellence: | Passion to do our best in each moment     |
| ✓ | Integrity:  | Do the right thing, not the easy thing    |
| ✓ | Service:    | We care and it makes a difference         |

## **Goals**

Three overall goals provide direction for achieving the vision and mission. The Department will achieve each goal by implementing a set of objectives with corresponding targets. Each objective includes priority actions. Progress on implementation of the Strategic Plan will be measured through a set of outcome-based performance measures.

**Parks and Facilities:** Ensure equitable access to safe and attractive parks and facilities that meet community needs.

**Recreation Programs:** Offer high quality recreation programs to all age groups, diverse interests and all neighborhoods.

**Organization:** Create a dynamic, efficient, professional organization committed to an ongoing process of innovation.

## **Community Benefits**

In addition to delivering specific programs and services, the Department also has a broader role in supporting a healthy and strong community. In implementing the strategic plan, the Department will help provide many benefits to the community. The Department's efforts will complement those of citizens, community groups and other City departments to improve the City of Covington. The list of community outcomes below, as reflected in the City Vision Statement, illustrates the ways in which the Department will continue to benefit the community.

- ✓ Community image and sense of place
- ✓ Economic development
- ✓ Safety and security
- ✓ Family and youth
- ✓ Community Health
- ✓ Responsible government
- ✓ Environmental resource protection
- ✓ Recreational experiences

## DEPARTMENT MISSION

To build a great community together through people, parks and programs

## CORE VALUES

### Creativity

Freedom to imagine and the courage to act

### Excellence

Passion to do our best in each moment

### Integrity

Do the right thing, not the easy thing

### Service

We care and it makes a difference

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## COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

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## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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	B6. Increase awareness of recreational services and program philosophy.	C6. Increase customer service and satisfaction.

Figure 2: Strategic Plan Framework



## **B. PLANNING CONTEXT**

This section provides an overview of trends and issues that will set the context for the Department in the coming decade. The information was developed through a review of City Council priorities, census data and other demographic data, neighborhood meetings, survey results, and operational statistics.

### **Community Priorities**

The plan's objectives and actions respond to the priorities developed by the City Council. The overarching themes of the priorities are: "aesthetics, pedestrian friendly, and quality of life." The specific priorities are:

- ✓ Youth and Family
- ✓ Transportation and Traffic
- ✓ Infrastructure Maintenance
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Downtown
- ✓ Doing Business Effectively and Efficiently
- ✓ Parks and Recreation

### **Demographics**

Covington is an evolving community. The City's age, family composition and ethnic profiles will also change. The Department will monitor these changes, as well as trends regarding income and educational attainment, and continually adjust its programs to meet community needs.

### **Population Growth**

After rapid population growth of 19% between 2000 and 2005 to reach a population of 16,985, Covington is expected to grow more slowly in the coming decades as the supply of land is built out. Still, the City is projected to add almost 2,469 residents between 2006 and 2023.

### **Ethnicity**

As of the 2000 Census, the City's ethnic make-up was White 87.9%, Asian 3.1%, African American 2.5%, Native American 1%, Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander 0.2%, and Other 1.8%.

### **Age**

Covington is a young community. 36.3% of the population is under the age of 19, 54.2% is between the ages of 20 and 54 and 9.5% is over the age of 55. Of that last group, only 3.8% is over the age of 65. Because of this mix, programs have been historically geared toward younger users, however, the need to continually reassess the quantity and design of programs, services and facilities to meet changing age-related needs will be realized.

## **Income**

The largest portion of residents has a household income between \$50,000 and \$100,000. The division of upper and lower income residents is split equally at 13% for those that had incomes of \$100,000 or more or \$50,000 or less.

## **Households**

Covington is currently home to 4,398 households. Families with children comprise 52.2% of households, with 70.1% of these being married couple households and 16.1% being single-parent households. Single-parent female-headed households, which generally have lower incomes than single-parent male-headed or married couple households, constitute 9.7% of the households. 95.6 percent of Covington residents own their own home.

## **Educational Attainment**

The percent of residents in Covington who have completed some years of education beyond high school is 66.6%, which is higher than the average of 59.3% for residents in Washington State. However, the percent of individuals who have completed graduate college education, including master's degrees, professional or doctorate degrees (24.8%) is below the state average of 27.7%.

## **Data Collection**

The City has conducted several surveys and meetings that have highlighted both areas of success and areas in need of improvement. The 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2006 surveys included a special focus on parks and recreation. Staff, Commission and Council members participated in a series of neighborhood homeowner association meetings and open houses to obtain additional information. Regular program evaluations are conducted by participants at the conclusion of specific recreation programs and the Department monitors program use patterns and industry trends to identify areas of growing community need and interest. All of that data is factored in to the results.

Overall, the data showed that Department's programs, services and facilities are moderately to well used. The survey also shows a high rate of satisfaction with services in the general community and higher rates of satisfaction among those who had used a park, recreation facility, or recreation program in the 12 months prior to the survey. According to the survey:

### **Park and Facility Rate of Use**

72.3% of the residents indicated that they or someone in their household had used a Covington park, recreation facility in the 12 months prior to the survey. Visitation of the Covington Aquatic Center increased in 2005 over 2004 when it was operated by King County. Community groups who participated in focus groups during the planning process reported that athletic fields and gymnasiums were overused or unavailable.

#### Recreation Program Use

Only 22.8% of residents indicated that they had participated in a City recreation program over the past 12 months. Interestingly, over 60% of the respondents indicated that availability of youth recreation programs at the highest unmet need in the community.

#### Rate of Satisfaction

According to the participant surveys, the majority rated recreation opportunities, services, and programs as excellent or good. The data collection methods for this indicator will be improved in the future with the completion additional community surveys and more consistent application of participant satisfaction evaluations.

#### Park System Meeting Needs

44.3% of residents indicated that the park system met their needs. This indicates that the majority of park users feel that the system is not meeting their needs. The top facilities that are needed include: Trails 30.8%, picnic areas 20.4%, play areas 19.2%, softball/baseball fields 17.9% and soccer fields at 16.4%. Additionally, due to the loss of habitat and growth of the community, conservation of natural resources is an increasingly important issue for the Department.

#### Park and Facility Maintenance

The majority of respondents indicated that it is important to maintain park and recreation facilities within the City. 74% indicated that this was very important. Only 9% considered maintenance unimportant. Over 63% indicated that maintaining the Aquatic Center at a high level was highly important.





## Chapter 3: **STRATEGIC ACTIONS**

## Chapter 3: STRATEGIC ACTIONS

The following pages document the range of strategies and objectives developed through the strategic planning process for each of the three goal areas. The results will be used to help guide implementation of the Covington Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. The goal areas are:

- Parks
- Recreation Programs
- Organizational Development

Each section includes the following elements:

**Goal Statement:** The overall result that the Department is committed to achieving.

**Objectives:** Measurable outcomes that create manageable milestones for planning.

**Targets:** Specific indicators for measuring achievement of objectives.

**Actions:** The steps the Department will take to achieve the objectives.

### REFINING THE PLAN

The material in this section will be refined during the update process. Some of the quantitative targets are preliminary estimates of how much improvement the department can achieve. The department will assess how quickly or slowly this statistic and the other statistics change based on several years of data. Based on this assessment, the Department will adjust the targets to reflect benchmarks that are achievable and yet “stretch” the organization to continually improve its performance. In other cases, there is no existing measurement and the first task of the department will be to establish a baseline measurement. Measurement will occur in some cases through the use of existing operational data. In other cases, new data collection methods will be needed. As the system is built over time, the measures will be used both to ensure Departmental accountability to plan goals and to identify additional strategic issues. Ultimately, performance measures will be utilized in the development of Departmental budgets.



## A. PARKS AND FACILITIES

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES		
PARKS AND FACILITIES	RECREATION PROGRAMS	ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Provide safe, clean, attractive parks and facilities in adequate numbers and diversity distributed throughout the community now and into the future.	Offer diverse, high quality recreation, athletic and aquatic programs to all age groups, interests and ability levels.	Create a dynamic organization committed to an ongoing process of innovation.
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A5. Increase park satisfaction rating as perceived by community members.	B5. Support ongoing activities.	C5. Enhance Commission operations.
	B6. Increase awareness of recreational services and program philosophy.	C6. Increase customer service and satisfaction.

## **A. PARKS AND FACILITIES**

### **Goal**

Provide safe, clean, attractive parks and facilities in adequate numbers and diversity, distributed throughout the community now and into the future to meet the community needs.

Our goal is to ensure that we respond to the community needs by providing equitable access to safe and attractive parks. We have found that the City of Covington needs more acres of both active and passive parks, particularly in the areas of trails and athletic fields. This situation will only be exacerbated as the population of our City continues to grow. Our strategies in this area are three fold. First, we need to identify and obtain new funding sources for the creation of new parks. Second, we need to get the most out of the existing facilities located within the City through capital improvements and scheduling. Lastly, we need to focus energy on maintenance to create beautiful public spaces based on sound environmental protection, and best available science.

### **Objectives and Targets**

#### **A1 Increase park and facility maintenance and operation levels.**

**Target:** Increase user satisfaction for parks and facilities maintenance from 55.9% to 75%.

**Rationale:** Community members have indicated a strong desire for well-maintained, safe and attractive parks and facilities. Over time, as the Department increases the amount of park land and developed facilities to keep pace with population growth, maintaining or increasing the current satisfaction level will require efficient new processes to maintain more acres with a fixed or constrained resources.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Update maintenance guidelines to keep pace with citizen desire and safety standards.	2007 Review annually	Parks and Recreation Director and Parks and Forestry Commission	Park Fund
Develop maintenance and operations plans for all park areas and apply maintenance guidelines.	2007 And as needed	Parks and Recreation Director and Parks and Forestry Commission	Park Fund
Provide adequate budget, staff or contractors to allow for equal to or increased maintenance levels.	2007 Review annually	Parks and Recreation Director and City Council	Park Fund
Survey participants to gauge maintenance satisfaction.	2009	Contractor	Park Fund

**A2 Expand facility capacity to match growth consistent with the Capital Investment Plan.**

**Target:** Increase utilization of parks. Optimize utilization of existing park acreage. Acquire and develop new park areas to keep up with growth.

**Rationale:** There is high demand for trails, passive use parks and athletic fields in Covington. Walking, biking and running are popular activities and there are few City operated trails. Athletic fields are overused, unavailable, or in need of better maintenance. A specific need is more regular access for practice and play. The City's below average amount of park acreage contributes to this situation, but there is an opportunity to make better use of the existing limited supply of facilities. Passive use areas are diminishing due to rapid growth.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Secure funding to realize the projects as scheduled in the Capital Investment Plan	2007 And as scheduled	Parks and Recreation Director and Parks and Forestry Commission	CIP, REET, Grants, Ballot Measures
Update the Capital Investment Plan	2007 Annually	Parks and Forestry Commission	Park Fund
Develop interlocal agreement with the School Districts for capital improvement, operation and maintenance of School District owned athletic facilities	2008	Parks and Recreation Director and City Attorney	Park Fund





**A3 Secure new revenue sources to support the operation of existing facilities and acquire and develop future sites.**

**Target:** Increase funding per capita, diversity of funding, grant funding and the number of partnerships.

**Rationale:** Covington's budget has experienced several years of uncertainty, heightening the usual unpredictability of funding decisions. Partly as a consequence of the state initiatives, funding models have not stabilized to provide predictable funding. Therefore, the Department will seek to diversify its funding to maintain its service to the community, placing a priority on partnership development, grants, volunteers, and charitable giving.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Secure new revenues to realize the projects as scheduled in the Capital Investment Plan	2007 And as scheduled	Parks and Recreation Director and Parks and Forestry Commission	CIP, REET, Developer Fees, Grants, Ballot Measures
Prepare and adopt Park Impact Fees	2007	Planning Manager and Planning Commission	Development Services Fund
Investigate and implement concessionaire agreements to support facility operations	2007	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Develop and implement a Dare to Care Gift Program	2007	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Utilize volunteer to provide service and build community	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund

**A4 Increase cost recovery of facility operations.**

**Target:** Increase percentage of cost recovery for the operation of facilities.

**Rationale:** The Department will evaluate its cost recovery strategy to respond to constrained state and local revenues. The result will be cost recovery targets that vary for different participant groups, reflecting the circumstance of each group, while maintaining access to services for low-income participants.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Review facility operation costs and compare with standards	2007	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Prepare and implement facility operations plans for each facility	2007	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund

**A5 Increase Park satisfaction rating as perceived by community members.**

**Target:** Increase satisfaction rating from 44% to 75%.

**Rationale:** Community members indicated that the current park system was not meeting their needs. To improve the health and vitality of the community and provide the important park services available to the community, this satisfaction level should be raised.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Update the CIP to reflect changes in community needs	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director and Parks and Forestry Commission	Park Fund
Develop facilities as contained within the CIP	2007 As funding allows	Parks and Recreation Director	Ballot measure, grants, developer fees and requirements, REET
Survey citizens to determine satisfaction levels.	2009	Contractor	Park Fund



## B. RECREATION PROGRAMS

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES		
PARKS AND FACILITIES	RECREATION PROGRAMS	ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Provide safe, clean, attractive parks and facilities in adequate numbers distributed throughout the community now and into the future.	Offer diverse, high quality recreation, athletic and aquatic programs to all age groups, interests and ability levels.	Create a dynamic organization committed to an ongoing process of innovation.
A1. Increase park and facility maintenance and operation levels.	B1. Increase program participation rates.	C1. Maintain and increase staff engagement and training.
A2. Expand facility capacity to match growth consistent with the Capital Investment Plan.	B2. Secure new revenue sources to support the provision of program services.	C2. Develop performance measures for all program elements.
A3. Secure new revenue sources to support the operation of existing facilities and acquire and develop future sites.	B3. Increase program cost recovery.	C3. Take full advantage of non-City funding alternatives.
A4. Increase cost recovery of facility operations.	B4. Increase participant satisfaction.	C4. Improve productivity and organizational effectiveness.
A5. Increase park satisfaction rating as perceived by community members.	B5. Support ongoing activities.	C5. Enhance Commission operations.
	B6. Increase awareness of recreational services and program philosophy.	C6. Increase customer service and satisfaction.

## **B. RECREATION PROGRAMS**

### **Goal**

Offer diverse, high quality recreation, athletic and aquatic programs to all age groups, interests and ability levels.

Our goal is to offer high quality programs to all ages, interests and ability levels. Survey data indicated that youth recreation programs was the largest unmet need in the City. The City offers limited recreation programming in the areas of athletics, aquatics, special events and enrichment. Goals continues to be to focus on improving our cost recovery ability while providing for those who cannot afford our services; improving our ability to collect information on customer satisfaction and educating the public about the philosophy of recreational services.

### **Objectives and Targets**

#### **B1. Increase program participation rates.**

Target: Track and increase aggregate program use from 40% to 50%.

Rationale: The department's aggregate program utilization rate shows what percentage of the total class spaces has been filled. The measure indicates the degree to which the Department is offering popular classes and how well it is marketing its program to the community. In our data collection, many commented that they didn't know what the department offers. By tracking and improving the program use measure the Department will be ensuring that it is meeting community needs and effectively providing information to the public.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Determine deficient program areas and provide programming to respond to those areas.	2007	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor	Park Fund
Develop a communications plan to effectively market department programs and services.	2007	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Create a Parks and Recreation Ambassador program.	2008	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Increase use of local media, web based communications and distribution of print material to expand public awareness	2007	Parks and Recreation Director, Public Information Officer	Park Fund

Survey customers and citizens to determine if desires and needs are being met.	2009	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor and Consultant	Park Fund
Improve quality of existing programs.	2007	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor	Park Fund
Develop new and innovative program offerings.	2007 Annually	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor	Park Fund
Review fees to determine appropriateness.	2007 Annually	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor	Park Fund

**B2. Secure new revenue sources to support the provision of program services.**

**Target:** Increase funding per capita, diversity of funding and the number of partnerships.

**Rationale:** Covington's budget has experienced several years of uncertainty, heightening the usual unpredictability of funding decisions. Partly as a consequence of the state initiatives, funding models have not stabilized to provide predictable funding. Therefore, the Department will seek to diversify its funding to maintain its service to the community, placing a priority on partnership development, grants, volunteers, and charitable giving.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Secure new revenues to provide staff and the ability to offer programs.	2007	Parks and Recreation Director, Parks and Forestry Commission, Arts Commission	Ballot measure, park fund
Expand volunteer program and meet with service clubs and neighborhood associations to garner support.	2008 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director, Parks and Forestry Commission, Arts Commission	Park Fund
Increase the use of advertising sales, sponsorships and donations.	2007 Seasonally	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor	Park Fund
Investigate the use of contract services to provide revenue to support the provision of services	2008 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund

**B3. Increase program cost recovery.**

**Target:** Increase percentage of cost recovery for the provision of services.

**Rationale:** Currently the department recovers 60% of costs, which reduces the general fund contribution required to meet community needs. The Department will evaluate its cost recovery strategy to respond to constrained state and local revenues. The result will be cost recovery targets that vary for different participant groups, reflecting the circumstance of each group, while maintaining access to services for low-income participants.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Review revenues and expense on a program-by-program basis.	2007 Seasonally	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor	Park Fund
Increase use of donations, grants, charitable giving and sponsorships.	2007 Seasonally	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor	Park Fund
Reduce program expenses.	2007 Seasonally	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor	Park Fund

**B4. Increase participant satisfaction.**

**Target:** Increase user satisfaction regarding quality of programs.

**Rationale:** The majority of participants surveyed, rated program services as good or excellent. This customer feedback on program quality is a very important measure of the Department's success. The Department will work to improve the methods of receiving program satisfaction information, develop better tools for tracking and establish a target of 80%, as a broad indication that it is offering the right mix, quantity and quality of programming. By tracking customers' feedback, the Department can ensure that efforts to increase utilization, participation or cost recovery do not effect its commitment to quality.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Update the Recreation Comprehensive Plan to reflect changes in community needs	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Develop programs to respond to the needs	2007 As funding allows	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Survey citizens to determine satisfaction levels.	2009	Contractor	Park Fund

**B5. Support ongoing activities and develop new programs to keep pace with the changing community.**

**Target:** Long standing successful programs should be supported as funding allows. New programs must be developed to continue to serve the growing and changing population.

**Rationale:** It is important to build program continuity and reputation to gain consumer confidence. Programs that come and go, and then come again deflate the confidence in the customer. New programs must be provided that keep pace with societal trends and the desires of the community to avoid stagnation and foster participation.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Improve quality of existing programs.	2007 Annually	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor	Park Fund
Develop new and innovative program offerings.	2007 Annually	Aquatic Supervisor Recreation/Athletic Supervisor	Park Fund
Survey citizens to determine satisfaction.	2009	Consultant	Park Fund

**B6. Increase awareness of recreational services and program philosophy.**

**Target:** Increase user knowledge regarding the awareness of the services of the Department and the benefits of parks and recreation.

**Rationale:** It is important for the citizenry to gain awareness of the programs that are provided to allow them the opportunity to participate. Part of this education process is to provide information on the overall benefits that parks and recreation programs provide the community and the individual. Educating the customers about specific program philosophies will aid in gaining understanding of program goals and reduce the potential for conflicts.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Develop a communications plan to market programs, benefits and services.	2008	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Create a Parks and Recreation Ambassador Program	2008	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Increase use of media, web-based communications and distribution of print material to expand public awareness	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director, Parks and Forestry Commission, Arts Commission and Public Information Officer	Park Fund General Fund

## C. ORGANIZATION

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES		
PARKS AND FACILITIES	RECREATION PROGRAMS	ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Provide safe, clean, attractive parks and facilities in adequate numbers distributed throughout the community now and into the future.	Offer diverse, high quality recreation, athletic and aquatic programs to all age groups, interests and ability levels.	Create a dynamic, professional, efficient organization committed to an ongoing process of innovation.
A1. Increase park and facility maintenance and operation levels.	B1. Increase program participation rates.	C1. Maintain and increase staff engagement and training.
A2. Expand facility capacity to match growth consistent with the Capital Investment Plan.	B2. Secure new revenue sources to support the provision of program services.	C2. Develop performance measures for all program elements.
A3. Secure new revenue sources to support the operation of existing facilities and acquire and develop future sites.	B3. Increase program cost recovery.	C3. Take full advantage of non-City funding alternatives.
A4. Increase cost recovery of facility operations.	B4. Increase participant satisfaction.	C4. Improve productivity and organizational effectiveness.
A5. Increase park satisfaction rating as perceived by community members.	B5. Support ongoing activities.	C5. Enhance Commission operations.
	B6. Increase awareness of recreational services and program philosophy.	C6. Increase customer service and satisfaction.



## C. ORGANIZATION

### Goal

Create a dynamic, professional, efficient organization committed to an ongoing process of innovation.

In order to make our vision a reality, our organization needs to: provide training and support to its Commissioners, Volunteers and Staff; expand and develop new partnerships in the community; further expand non-general fund resources available to the Department; develop accountability standards for each work unit to improve productivity and organizational effectiveness, and ensure that volunteer and staff efforts are recognized and appreciated.

### Objectives and Targets

#### C1. Maintain and increase staff engagement and training.

Target: Achieve a staff engagement level of 80% or better according to results of a Staff Engagement Scorecard as developed by the Department.

Rationale: Recent research demonstrates that measures of employee engagement are highly correlated with employee performance. Employees who feel positively motivated and well supported, and who understand what is expected of them, perform well on performance indicators such as safety, retention, and customer service.

Actions	Time Frame	Lead Responsibility	Funding Source
Develop and implement a staff engagement scorecard	2008	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Educate staff on the Performance Appraisal process and job expectations	2007	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Provide professional development and training opportunities	2007 Annually	Direct Supervisor	Park Fund
Continue to administer the Merit Pay System	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Conduct anonymous staff surveys to gauge needs and satisfaction	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Promote open lines of communication using a variety of methods including interpersonal, written and team building exercises	2007 Annually	All staff	Park Fund

## **C2. Develop performance measures for all program elements.**

**Target:** Implement the Strategic Plan and develop performance measures from plan.

**Rationale:** The Department is committed to delivering measurable benefits to the community. Developing performance measures based on the strategic plan will allow the Department to ensure that it is accountable to the public, its Commissions and the City Council.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Implement performance measures that are meaningful to staff and the community. Identify areas where data collection is needed and develop protocols for measuring performance.	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Implement on-going strategic plan, budgeting, and program services	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund

## **C3. Take full advantage of non-City funding alternatives.**

**Target:** Increase funding per capita, diversity of funding and the number of partnerships.

**Rationale:** Covington's budget has experienced several years of uncertainty, heightening the usual unpredictability of funding decisions. Partly as a consequence of the State initiatives, funding models have not stabilized to provide predictable funding. Therefore, the Department will seek to diversify its funding to maintain its service to the community, placing a priority on partnership development, grants, volunteers, and charitable giving.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Expand partnerships to leverage in kind and financial resources	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director, Aquatic Supervisor, Athletic/Recreation Supervisor	Park Fund
Utilize volunteers to expand access to service while building community	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director, Athletic/Recreation Supervisor	Park Fund
Expand grant seeking to identify new sources and resources	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund

Explore joint development opportunities with public and private partners to generate revenues	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director, Aquatic Supervisor, Athletic/Recreation Supervisor	Park Fund
Pursue local ballot measures as allowed.	2007	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Explore the establishment of a non-profit organization to better facilitate the receipt of donations	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund

#### **C4. Improve productivity and organizational effectiveness.**

**Target:** Maintain current levels of service with minimal increase in staff.

**Rationale:** Given increasing demands for service in a constrained fiscal environment, the Department will develop new delivery models and efficiencies to maintain its commitment to meeting community needs. With the City's population growing, innovation and process improvements will be necessary if the Department is to maintain its current service levels with adding only minimal additional staff positions.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Expand the use of new information technology and web-based tools	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director, Aquatic Supervisor, Athletic/Recreation Supervisor	Park Fund
Base new employee recruitment on City values	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Enhance employee wellness to reduce Sick Leave use.	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Conduct training on how to develop and use realistic performance indicators, goals and objectives and accountability standards	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Encourage, train and provide organizational tools and procedures	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director, Aquatic Supervisor, Athletic/Recreation Supervisor	Park Fund

## **C5. Enhance Commission operations.**

**Target:** Develop and implement Commission training program.

**Rationale:** The community members who serve on the City Commissions provide an invaluable service to the Department by contributing their insights, experience and energy. To respect the time and efforts of these volunteers, the Department will continually seek new ways to enhance all advisory group processes. The goal is to make the time spent in meetings as productive and valuable as possible and time outside of meetings as effective as possible.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Strengthen the role of Commission in policy-making for the Department	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Provide leadership training for Chair and Co-Chairs on the policy role of the Commission and meeting management.	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Survey Commission members to identify strengths and weaknesses of current operations.	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Develop recommendations for improving Commission operations. This will address: clarification that Commission role is to address policy, not detailed operational matters; description of expectations for staff support; annual planning and policy advisory milestones calendar; meeting management; best practices and principles (public comment, parliamentary procedure).	2007	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund
Update Commission rules and guidelines.	2007 Annually	Parks and Recreation Director	Park Fund

**C6. Increase customer service and satisfaction.**

**Targets:** Increase the satisfaction rating for quality and professionalism of departmental operations.

**Rationale:** Customer feedback on department operations and customer service is a very important measure of the department's success, credibility and standing in the community. By tracking customers' feedback, the Department can ensure that efforts to increase utilization, participation or cost recovery do not effect its commitment to quality and the services that are provided.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Conduct a citizen survey to gage overall satisfaction of departmental operations and professionalism of staff	2009	Consultant	Park Fund
Measure and collect date on participant satisfaction through Covington Cares program	2007 Program by Program	Parks and Recreation Director, Aquatic Supervisor, Athletic/Recreation Supervisor	Park Fund





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## **Chapter 4: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND UPDATES**

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## Chapter 4: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND UPDATES

The Department will ensure that the plan is a living document through a regular process of monitoring and updates. The plan will be implemented through a series of activities in which annual priorities are translated into budget items and action plans. This implementation process will be integrated with the long-term plan monitoring and update cycle.

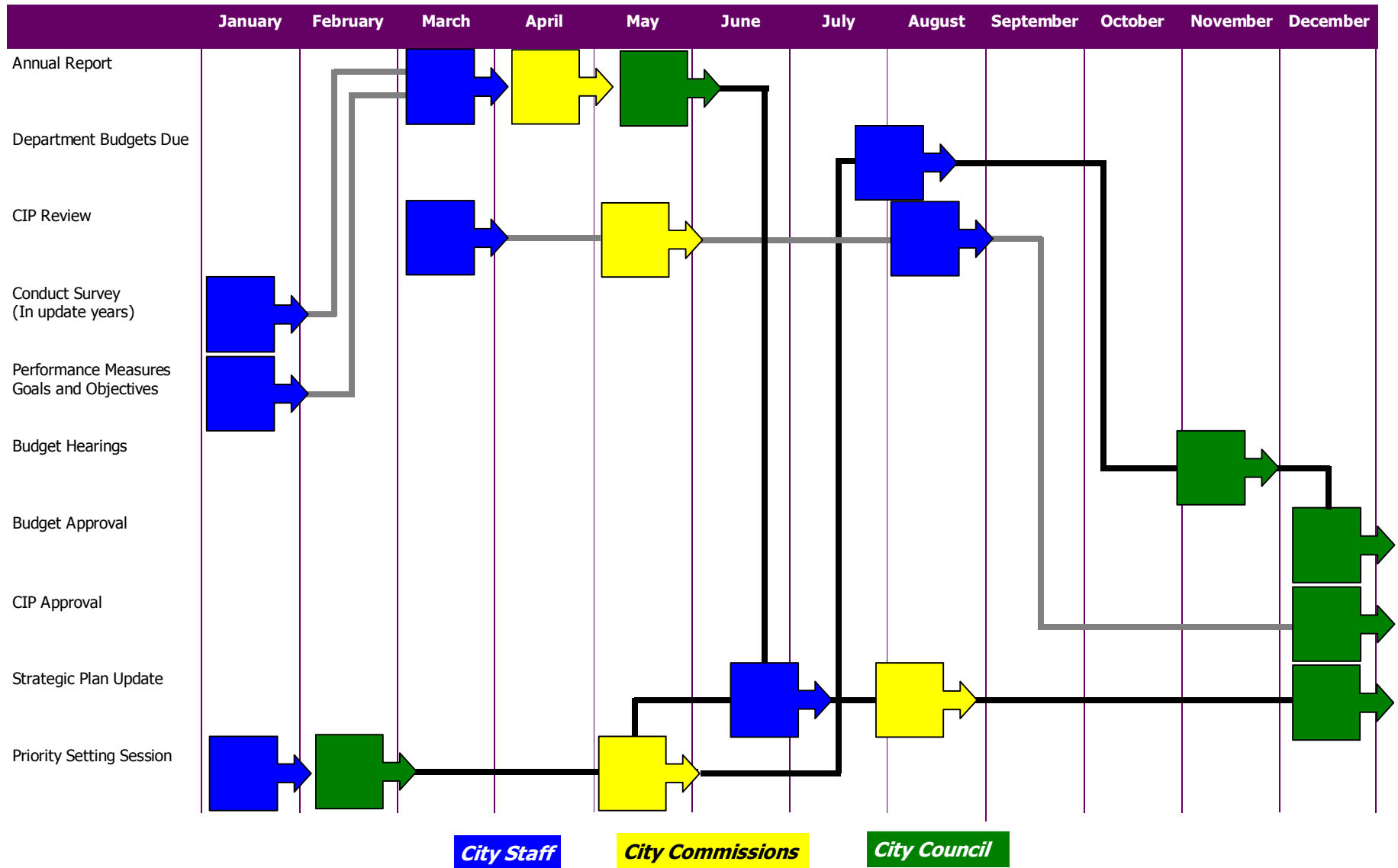
### A. ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION AND BUDGET LINKAGE

The Department will use an ongoing annual process for implementing and updating the plan, including linking plan priorities to the City's budget and Capital Investment Program. As illustrated in Figure 3, the process includes the following milestones:

<b>March</b> Annual Progress Report	The Director will develop a report to review implementation progress. For each goal area, the report will describe the status of implementation, including successes and barriers, and list the next steps and any resource or support needs. The report will also review prior year data from: CIP review, survey results, and performance measures.
<b>May</b> Parks and Forestry Commission CIP Project Review Meeting	The Commission will conduct a session on CIP projects in preparation for the budget process.
<b>June</b> Parks and Forestry Commission Priorities and Plan Update Session	The Commission will meet to develop strategic priorities for the coming year based on a review of the Director's progress report.
<b>July</b> Strategic Plan Update	The Department will update the Strategic Plan to reflect the findings of the Director's report and the Commission priorities.
<b>August</b> Budget Submittal	The Department submits its budget request to the Finance Department.
<b>October</b> City Council Priorities	The City Council will establish its priorities with input from the Department's strategic planning process.
<b>December</b> Final Budget and CIP	The City completes its budget process including items developed through the strategic planning process.

## Milestone Events

### Parks and Recreation Department



**Figure 3: Annual Plan Update and Budget Linkage Process**



## **B. UPDATE PROCESS**

The City will conduct a comprehensive strategic planning update process every four years. This will consist of the following activities:

- ✓ Assessment of community needs and trends using demographic data, usage statistics, surveys and focus groups
- ✓ Involvement of Department staff
- ✓ Review of progress toward action objectives
- ✓ Review of performance measures
- ✓ Management workshops
- ✓ Parks and Forestry and Arts Commissions input





## **Chapter 5: APPENDIX**

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### **Plans and studies used in the formation of this plan include:**

City of Covington Comprehensive Recreation Plan, 2002.  
Metropolitan Parks District Study, Hebert Research, 2003.  
City of Covington Comprehensive Plan Chapter 6, Parks Element, 2003.  
CARE Report, Northwest Institute for Children and Families, 2004.  
City of Covington Comprehensive Arts Plan, 2004.  
City of Covington Parks Trails and Open Space Capital Investment Plan, 2005.  
Hebert Citizen Survey 2006.

Copies of the plans and studies may be obtained by contacting the Parks and Recreation Department.